THE

CHOICE.

By Alex^r. Thomson — This was the first piece of Poetry published by him.
He was afterwards Author of "Christ, a Poem in 2 Cantos." London 1791, Edin^r. 1792. 8vo
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Mente às Musas dada. CAMOENS.

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CHOICE

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CHOICE.

CANTO I.

'TWAS now the hour of Midnight's ſolemn reign,
And Nature's chearful face o'er half the world
Darkneſs had veil'd, that Silence might repoſe
Beneath the drowſy canopy of Sleep;
While in the wide expanſe of ether clear
The moon's chaſte radiance ſhone, and all around
Sparkled the ſtarry gems of azure heav'n,
When, led by Meditation's gentle hand,
I reached a lonely vale: On either ſide
A verdant hillock roſe, with eaſy ſlope—
And them between, a little winding brook
Stole thro' the pebbles ſmooth, on liquid foot,

And, ſweetly murm'ring, kiſſed its daiſied banks;
There, on a moſs-grown rock, I ſate me down,
Which overhung the ſtream, and, wrapt in thought,
Fix'd on the ſhadowy ground my penſive eyes—
A thouſand images of every hue
Succeſſive glided thro' my wand'ring mind,
And paſſed unheeded; till the dreary hour,
Whoſe haſty ſummons, two ſhort months before,
Had call'd my father to the bed of duſt,
In all its horrors roſe; and Fancy's ear
Still heard his knell, and, ſhuddered at the ſound,
A ſudden burſt of anguiſh whelm'd my ſoul,
And ſorrow's briny dew my cheek beſprent—
Yet not for him—but for myſelf I mourn'd:
The world lay wide before me; but, alas!
My guide was gone, and all ſeem'd dark and drear:
My timid youthful heart recoil'd at thought
Of ent'ring all alone the buſy ſcene:
No tender eye to watch my heedleſs ſteps;
No ſage experience to direct my courſe,
And lead me ſafely thro' the tangling maze,
The more than *Cretan* labyrinth of life.
Long did I ponder what ſhould fix my mind,
And mark the colour of my future days:
But ſtill perplexity declin'd to chuſe;

Irreſo-

Irreſolution ſtill each ſcheme oppos'd;
And fear and doubt on ev'ry motion hung.

But, raiſing from the ground my humid eyes,
How did I wonder at the change I ſaw!
Stead of the ſloping hills and creeping brook,
A wild and awful proſpect broke at once
Upon my view—a rugged mountain roſe,
And rear'd to heav'n its foreſt-cinctured head,
High as my aching ſight could ſtretch aloft;
And on its pointed ſummit ſtood a dome,
Whoſe nearer end preſented to the view
A ſtately pile, with regal ſplendour built,
Pillar'd with marble, and o'erlaid with gold.
While, tott'ring from its baſe, the farther ſide
A huge, ſtupendous, mould'ring ruin hung:
One only narrow, ſteep and winding path
Led to the top, of ſoft and ſlipp'ry ſand,
Whoſe treach'rous ſurface failed beneath the feet,
And ſunk at every ſtep: On either hand
Grim Danger threat'ned: Here, in dark array,
A frowning ridge of pendent craggy rocks,
Tremendous, nodded o'er the gloomy paſs;
While there, with foaming rage and deaf'ning voice,
A headlong torrent from the mountain fell,
And ruſh'd with dark impetuous courſe along

Cloſe

Cloſe by the ſandy road, which, furious oft,
It undermin'd, and ſwept at once away
Whole rocky fragments, cruſted o'er with ſand;
And ev'ry paſſenger, whoſe luckleſs foot,
At that dire moment, trode the rough deſcent;
Borne by the rapid current breathleſs down,
Plunged in a gulph profound, that yawn'd beſide
The mountain's baſe, and ſunk—to riſe no more.

In wonder loſt, while on the myſtic ſcene
Eager I gaz'd, a black and ſtormy cloud
Stood fixt above my head, which op'ning wide
Its lucid folds, diſplay'd its edges, ting'd
With gold and purple: A majeſtic ſhape
Stood on the airy billow; more than man
His ſtature ſeem'd, and on his princely brow
Sate Pride imperial and correcting Awe.
A golden diadem, with ſplendid wreath
Circled his regal temples, fenc'd beneath
With prickly thorns, whoſe ſharp and arrowy points
The painful glory nailing to his head,
Deep pierc'd his tender fleſh; a purple robe
Floating luxuriant from his ſhoulders hung;
Curling his waiſt around, a ſpeckled ſnake
Twin'd his inſidious train, and cloſely girt
His *Tyrian* veſture, with a chequer'd zone

Of

Of more than *Gordian* firmneſs; which beneath,
In radiant characters of waving gold,
I ſaw his name, by Flattery's pencil wrought,
Divine Ambition: Glory's Sacred King.
His blood-empurpl'd hand a ſceptre held,
With which, incumbent from the fleecy cloud,
He touch'd my head; and ſoft'ning with a ſmile
The native ſternneſs of his haughty mein,
Spread thus his bait to catch my youthful heart.

Alexis, Why doſt thou delay ſo long
To fix the bent of thy ſucceeding days?
Whence this irreſolution? Can thy mind
One moment heſitate? Oh! let not now
Pernicious Sloth conſume thy youthful prime,
And draw, with envious hand, the fable cloud
Of dull oblivion o'er thy future fame.
No longer hearken to the *Siren* ſong
Of luſkiſh idleneſs; recline no more
On pleaſure's couch inglorious. Can the man
Be truly ſaid to live, whoſe liſtleſs days
Creep ſilent on, nor leave a trace behind
Of ought by him atchiev'd, the boaſt of fame,
Or price of glory? He whoſe languid hours
Are ſpent in Slumber's lap; who never wakes
But to the feaſt; and, when the feaſt is o'er,

Strait ſleeps again; in what does he excel
The grazing oxen; Do not they the ſame?
How differs from their death the life of ſuch *,
When ſilence and oblivion cover both?
Oh, be not one of theſe: Exert thy pow'rs;
Shake off this baneful lethargy of ſoul,
This vile, unmanly ſoftneſs. Let the love
Of glory, and the golden hope of pow'r,
Fill ev'ry thought, and ev'ry wiſh inflame
With noble daring. Yonder narrow path
Shall bring at laſt thy perſevering ſteps
To Fortune's ſummit: Arduous is the ſteep;
But am not I thy guide? Let nought of fear
Poſſeſs thy ſpirit; think how vaſt the bliſs,
On Glory's pinnacle to ſit enthron'd,
The God of Peace and War; the envied gaze
Of kneeling multitudes; to ſpeak the words
Of law to nations, and diſpenſe at will
The ſmile of favour, and the frown of death.
Theſe the rewards which wait to crown thy toil;
Purſuits like theſe befit the godlike mind,
And claim thy nobleſt efforts: Rouſe thee then,
And let the ſacred ardour catch thy ſoul,
And ſpur thee on to deeds divinely great.

He

* Eorum ego vitam mortemque juxta aeſtumo, quoniam de utraque ſiletur.

SALLUST.

He ſpoke; but how diſcordant was the ſound
To all the feelings of my peaceful ſoul!
How did it ſhock my reaſon that my days
Should toil and ſuffer for an empty name!
I ſhudder'd at the thought; and inſtant thus
My firm refuſal to his ſpeech replied.

In vain, too powerful god, you waſte on me
Theſe rouſing words; in vain your effort ſtrives
To kindle in my breaſt the mad deſire
Of pow'r and grandeur; each idea there
Declares againſt thee: Elſewhere muſt thou ſeek
A mind more fitted to receive thy laws,
And catch thy baneful rage. How diff'rent far
Are all the wiſhes which this boſom knows;
Supremely happy, would but fate allow
In ſome ſequeſter'd nook to paſs my days
Far from the buſtle of the buſy world;

Where ſweet content and ſacred peace might dwell
And chace each anxious thought and care away;
Where no tumultuous paſſion might rebel,
Nor Virtue's angel dictates diſobey:

Where Vice and Folly never durſt intrude,
With their diſtorted forms to ſhock my eyes;
Where I might ſtudy to be wiſe and good,
Forget the earth, and commune with the ſkies:

Where no conſtraint my precious hours ſhould give
To formal trifles or attentions low;
Where I might gain the end for which I live,
Unknown to others learn myſelf to know.

My ſoul, to cuſtom's laws a ſlave no more,
On Contemplation's wings aloft ſhould ſoar;
And Solitude my beſt companion prove,
Save when the radiant form of ſacred Love,
Or ſtill more ſacred Friendſhip deign'd to ſhine,
And gild my humble roof with light divine.

Canſt thou, Ambition, joys like theſe beſtow?
Suſpicion, reſtleſs Fear, and thankleſs Care;
Theſe are the pleaſures which thy vot'ries know;
Theſe are the triumphs which thy fav'rites ſhare.

Fame, Pomp, and Pow'r, with juſt diſdain to view
Is more ſublime than empires to command;
And nobler far our paſſions to ſubdue,
Than reign the tyrant of a ſubject land.

Can ſplendid Trifles, or imperial Toys
Give ſolid Happineſs, like Virtue's Lore?
The Soul immortal ſcorns theſe empty joys,
Feels they are vain, and ſighs for ſomething more.
Let thoſe purſuits be mine, of Reaſon born,
Which grace the bloom of Youth, and Age adorn:
Thoſe magic Pleaſures, thoſe Delights refin'd,
Which Taſte and Fancy give the feeling Mind:
Theſe ſhall the calm of inward peace beſtow;
A bliſs thy votaries ſhall never know.

Ceaſe then, Deceiver, I was ne'er deſign'd
In Fortune's lifts to ſtruggle or to ſhine;
Calm is my Spirit, and averſe my Mind,
To ev'ry Tyranny, but moſt to thine!

CANTO II.

SOON as the Demon of Ambition heard
My words ſevere, a ſtern, terrific frown
Darken'd his brow, and from his angry eyes
Flaſh'd ſcorn indignant; roll'd into his cloud.
Swift, on the pinions of the Blaſt, he flew,
And inſtant vaniſh'd; when at once the air
Grew black and turbid; wing'd with livid flame,
Impetuous burſting from his cloudy cave,
Oblique, the Lightning darted; whilſt aloud
The deep and awful voice of Thunder ſpoke!

I look'd, and all was chang'd; the ſteep Aſcent,
The foaming Torrent, and the lofty Dome
Appear'd no more; a wild and barren Waſte,
In ruſſet Heath, and naked Horror clad,
Stretch'd far beyond my ken its dreary length;
Where nought of Verdure, Nature's choſen hue,

Refreſh'd

Refreſh'd the wearied eye; but ſcatter'd wide
Some ſolitary ſhrubs of leafleſs Furze,
Which bloom'd with ductile Gold *, and ſhow'd at once
The Wealth and Poverty that reign'd around;
The laſt was real, but the firſt a dream.

While this capricious ſcene amus'd mine eye,
Before me ſudden ſtood a horrid Form,
Uncouth, unlovely; by his looks he ſeem'd
The Heir of many Days †; his locks of ſnow,
Uncomb'd and rugged, on his ſhoulders broad
Lay thinly ſcatter'd; and the hand of care
Had plow'd deep furrows in his wrinkl'd front.
Sunk in their hollow ſockets, from beneath
The ſable horror of his ſhaggy brows,
Keen glar'd his piercing eyes; of ſqualid hue
And length enormous, from his pointed chin,
His beard depended: An unſeemly garb,
Which ſcarce conceal'd the parchment of his ſkin
With rags diſhoneſt, flutter'd in the wind.
With long and hooked nails his hands were arm'd,
Like Vulture's talons ſharp; in which he held,

With

* Em lugares eſtereis, ſem hervas nem plantas, produz a Natureza o ouro, para moſtrar que os amadores das riquezas naõ tem fè nem. HOURA.

† Πολλων ετων κληρυχος. SOPHOCLES.

With eager graſp, a richly-blooming branch
Of golden furze, to tempt the greedy eye;
Then grinning fiendlike a malicious ſmile,
In Wiſdom's borrow'd words he thus began:

Well haſt thou judg'd, my Son, with juſt diſdain,
To treat Ambition, and his phantoms vain:
But I have more ſubſtantial joys in ſtore
For thoſe who hearken to my prudent love.
Me Folly's erring voice aloud reviles,
And ſordid Avarice contemptuous ſtiles;
But fools alone will ſlight my ſacred name,
Reject my proffers, or my pow'r diſclaim.
Th' acute, the ſober, and the truly wiſe,
Agree with one conſent my worth to prize;
For what purſuit can more important be,
Than that, which gain'd, ſubjects the world to thee?
Which to attain, a happineſs beſtows,
That, nor diſguſt, nor diſappointment knows.
And will not Gold do this? Look round and ſay,
Where is the Pow'r that does not gold obey?
Almighty Gold to Guilt can friends procure,
And each defect of Mind and Body cure;
Beſtows a charm on Age and foul Diſeaſe,
And gives deformity the pow'r to pleaſe.

Gold

Gold even to Infamy can fame diſpenſe;
To Dullneſs judgment, and to Folly ſenſe;
In vain Love burns, Ambition toils in vain,
While Gold with eaſe can power and pleaſure gain;
Where is the wiſh that riches cannot buy,
Where is the want that gold will not ſupply?

More he had ſaid; but Patience could not bear
One moment longer ſuch a theme to hear;
And Indignation, which my boſom burn'd,
Theſe keen reproachful accents quick return'd.

Ceaſe, odious monſter, let thy raſhneſs fear
Again with words like theſe to ſhock mine ear;
In me what ſordid ſymptom didſt thou ſpy,
That thus my virtue thou haſt dar'd to try:
When ev'n Ambition's proffers met diſdain,
Could thy preſumption hope my heart to gain?
Ambition is the vice of noble minds,
Where oft a home each brilliant virtue finds;
But in that breaſt where love of lucre reigns,
What mental excellence a place retains?
If Fate has doom'd my heart ſome paſſion's ſlave,
Let it be one at leaſt that Nature gave;
Let Pow'r or Splendour all my thoughts inflame,
The love of Pleaſure, or the love of Fame;

But ſave me ſtill from one, whoſe baſe controul
Choaks ev'ry ſeed of Virtue in the ſoul;
Whoſe hateful preſence Faith and Honour flies,
Religion languiſhes, and Feeling dies.

Thus rais'd beyond its proper bounds, my rage
Pour'd forth a torrent of diſorder'd words,
And more had utter'd; when at once the ſound
Of muſic, more than mortal, gently ſeiz'd
The captive ear, and fetter'd ev'ry ſenſe
In ſilent rapture and attentive awe.

Approaching ſlow, a nymph was ſeen,
Harmony's inchanting Queen,
She, whoſe fingers rule the lyre,
She, whoſe charms the Bard inſpire;
To deck her form with matchleſs grace
Each finer pow'r of Taſte combin'd,
And to compleat her lovely face,
Majeſty with Sweetneſs join'd.

Her cheek diſplay'd in colours bright
All the bloom of gay deſire,
And her eyes, of brilliant light,
Beam'd the ſtrength of living fire.

Which

Which oft ſhe rais'd, in rapture high,
To meet the ſtarry-fronted ſky;
To her bewitching ſmile was giv'n
To lift the flaming ſoul to Heav'n,
And to her favour'd ſons impart
The tuneful, feeling, ardent heart.

Of laurel triumphant a flouriſhing crown,
With roſes and myrtle entwin'd,
Encircling her temples, hung gracefully down,
And braided her treſſes behind,
Her elegant treſſes of beautiful brown
Which wantonly play'd in the wind.

A mantle green, of lively hue,
With *Tyrian* violets broider'd o'er,
Around her ſhoulders careleſs flew,
Girt with a radiant Zone before,

The Zone of Love, from which, unſtrung,
The magic ſhell of rapture hung.

Where'er the muſic of her ſteps ſhe turn'd
Thro' the bare glebe freſh flowrets burſt their way;
In horror brown no longer Nature mourn'd,
But, cloth'd in new-born verdure, all was gay.

Rais'd by th' enchantment of her plaſtic eye,
Deep groves appear, with darkeſt umbrage crown'd,
Streams ſweetly murmur, Zephyrs ſoftly ſigh,
And all at once is Paradiſe around.

CANTO

CANTO III.

CLOSE by my ſide, the ſacred Muſe,
With ſmiles complacent, view'd me long;
Then fell her words like ſofteſt dews,
And thus inſpir'd the love of ſong.

No more, *Alexis*, let thy wav'ring Mind
Be to its juſt, its proper bias blind;
To others leave Preferment's eager ſtrife,
The pomp, the riches, and the cares of life:
Thine be the ſweeter taſk, the nobler toil
With ſkill to cultivate the Muſe's ſoil;
Each favour'd Name be thine the pow'r to praiſe,
And gild their mem'ries with immortal rays;
Thine be the ſong, whoſe ardent force ſhall prove
The Soul of Friendſhip, and the Heart of Love.
Perhaps the hand of laurel-wing'd Renown
Shall with the wreath of Fame thy temples crown;

Rouſe then each thought of fire; thy time employ
While Song can yield a pure and perfect joy;
Before the hours of Grief, with ſable wing,
Arrive to cloud thy morning's gaudy ſpring;
Tho' Song ev'n then can healing balm beſtow,
And ſooth, with lenient voice, the heart of woe;
Haſte then to ſeize this doubly-dear relief,
Joy's ſweet Companion, and the Friend of Grief.

The Queen of Rapture ſpoke; but ere my Soul,
In wonder loſt, an anſwer could return,
The Fiend of Riches ſhook his hoary head,
And thus, in Friendſhip's guiſe, his ſpeech reſum'd.

Let not, *Alexis*, thy unwary youth
To this deluding Syren lend an ear,
Heed not her idle tale; be warn'd of me;
For elſe thou may'ſt to each alluring hope,
And ev'ry brilliant proſpect, bid farewell;
If once thy tender boſom ſhould imbibe
The cank'ring blight of her pernicious lore,
Adieu, at once, to ev'ry manly Thought,
And firm Exertion; Negligence and Sloth
Would ſeize on ev'ry Pow'r; the liſtleſs Mind
Ev'n from the ſlighteſt effort would recoil,
And deem it hardſhip more than Man could bear:

Oh then beware, and ſhun her fatal path,
It leads to Ruin and Repentance ſure;
Her chief Companions are they not Contempt
And meager Poverty? Much, much indeed
She will not fail to promiſe; laurel Crowns,
The ſmiles of Beauty, and the praiſe of Pow'r,
And Wealth, and Fame, and Honour—all deceit:
Mark but the hue of Fortune, which attends
Her greateſt Favourites in ev'ry age;
Think of their Fates, and envy if you can.

How oft have thoſe, whoſe boſoms ev'ry ray
Of Genius kindled, thoſe by Nature bleſt
With Wit, with Fancy, and poetic fire,
Neglected, languiſh'd out their weary days
In dull obſcurity and ſordid want!
How oft in vain Dependence ſigh'd away
Their eager hours; and, after ſtruggling long
With cruel Diſappointment's keeneſt rage,
Sunk down at length, and yielded to the ſtorm:
While none of all the baſe, ungrateful crew,
Whoſe Hearts their comic Humour wont to chear,
Deign'd, with a ſmile of Comfort, to repay
The debt of Pleaſure; and, tho' Pity's Heart
Had oft in Silence melted o'er the tale
Of fancied Grief, in magic numbers told;

Yet,

Yet, ſhame to hear, no ſympathetic Eye
Paid, o'er the humble tomb, where Genius ſlept,
The much-indebted tribute of a Tear.

Call firſt to mind that too much injur'd name,
The Pride and Shame of *Luſitania's* Sons,
The only Glory which her Muſe can boaſt *;
Think of the cruel Fate which he ſuſtain'd;
An exile early from his native ſhore,
How long he wander'd over *India's* Realms,
Friendleſs and Poor, expos'd to all the Scorn
Of ſordid Ignorance; to all the rude,
Unfeeling Inſolence of brutal Pow'r,
And blind, capricious Favour's cauſeleſs change:
Nor this the worſt; a darker ſcene ſucceeds:
Ungrateful *Liſbon*, hide thy cruel head;
Couldſt thou behold the faithful Negroe Slave,
Ev'n in thy ſtreets, extend his wither'd Hand,
And aſk a ſlender pittance, to ſupport
The ſcanty Remnant of his Maſter's Life;
That precious Life, of greater value far
Than all thy ſlaviſh ſuperſtitious Sons—
Again let Earth expand her ample jaws,
And ſhroud thoſe walls, within whoſe guilty verge,

The

* Camoens.

The Man, whoſe patriot heart alone retain'd
The ſacred ſpirit of his country's love;
The Bard, who tun'd his ill-requited lyre *
To noble themes, and acted what he ſung †;
Denied the common charity of bread,
Which ev'ry worthleſs mendicant receives,
Clos'd the dark ev'ning of a ſtormy life:
A dire example to ſucceeding times,
How great a curſe ſuperior talents be,
Where barb'rous ignorance deſpotic reigns,
Nor knows to value what it cannot taſte ‡.

* Cuja Lyra ſonoroſa
Sera mais affamada que ditoſa. LUSIAD X.

† I hope I ſhall not here be ſuſpected by my readers of falling into the ſame error, which *Voltaire* committed, in his *Eſſay on Epic Poetry*, publiſhed in *England*, and which he thus acknowledges in a later Edition: "Camouens n'accompagna point "Vaſco de Gama dans ſon expedition, comme je l'avais dit dans mes editions pre- "cedentes; il n'alla aux grandes Indes que longtems apres." My intention in this line was only to intimate, that the courage of *Camoens* was equal to his genius; and that he had, to uſe his own emphatical expreſſion,

"N'uma maõ ſempre a Eſpada, e n'outra a Pena." LUSIAD VII.

‡ It would be injuſtice in the author not to acknowledge, that he caught the ſpirit of indignation which pervades this part of the Poem, from the animated and intereſting life of *Camoens*, prefixed to the *Luſiad*, by its elegant tranſlator; to which, upon compariſon, he will alſo be found to be indebted for ſeveral of the particular ideas.

Is not the fairy Bard *, whoſe plaſtic art
Gives life and action to the airy forms
Of mental thought, and ſhrouds his ſacred lore
In pleaſing Allegory's myſtic veil—
A mournful witneſs that my words are true,
Spite of the fragrant wreath of artful praiſe,
Which for the Virgin Queen his fancy wove,
Her cold, unthankful, parſimonious heart
Left him to ſtruggle on *Hibernia's* ſhore,
With all the horrors which on want attend:
Nor met the laughing Bard a milder fate,
Whoſe comic darts of *Hudibraſtic* wit
Ev'n from the face of Spleen might force a ſmile;
Nor he, whoſe name is oft with *Shakeſpear's* join'd,
The tender Poet of domeſtic woe †:
Whoſe *Orphan*, wedded in a luckleſs hour,
Oft as her ſtory on the ſcene appears,
In all the native eloquence of grief;
Spite of that monſter Faſhion's impious ſcorn,
Calls from the gen'ral eye a vulgar tear.

How many luckleſs Sons of Fame
Could my diſſuaſive counſel name,

Who

* Spenſer. † Otway.

Who long had cauſe to rue the time,
In which they firſt began to rhyme?

Lo! there thou ſeeſt the barb'rous *Pontic* ſhore,
Where *Iſter's* rapid waves forget to flow;
Where Winter's keeneſt blaſts inceſſant roar,
And all is horror and eternal ſnow.

To theſe unhoſpitable, dreary climes
Love's tender Teacher * was, in mercy, ſent
By him, to whom, in ſpite of all his crimes,
Each Roman Bard in ſlaviſh homage bent.

The ſweet luxuriant Bard of Fancy there
Sev'n diſmal years of horror dragg'd along,
And, wild with grief, diſtracted with deſpair,
Pour'd to the howling ſurge his plaintive ſong.

Ev'n there to *Caeſar's* name he altars rear'd;
Still ſought in vain permiſſion to return,
Till Death, invok'd ſo oft, at laſt appear'd
And laid his ſorrows in the peaceful urn.

The ſprightly effort of his wanton Muſe,
Tho' poiſon lurks in ev'ry luſcious line,

Might

* Ovid.

Might ſure, *Octavius!* have obtained excuſe
From Clemency ſo much extoll'd as thine.

Thus was the poor, miſtaken Bard repaid
For all the varniſh of a ſervile praiſe,
Which, on the cheek of Guilt profuſely laid,
Adorns a Tyrant's name with borrowed rays.

Such is the fate the Muſe's favourite knows,
And ſuch the recompenſe which ſhe beſtows.

CANTO

CANTO IV.

THUS far, in artful words of anxious fear,
Which Reaſon's ſober ſanction ſeem'd to wear,
The ſordid wretch detain'd my patient ear,
And vainly tried, by all the ſpecious art
Of Friendſhip's borrow'd zeal, to turn my heart,
From ardent thoughts, which breathe celeſtial fire,
To all the narrow aims of low deſire.

Unanſwer'd long the Heav'n deſcended Maid
Left not the words of Malice to remain;
A while with ſcorn the Demon ſhe ſurvey'd,
And thus at length replied her juſt diſdain.

Far from my thoughts it was, thou grov'ling ſlave,
That I ſhould ever waſte my words on thee,
Or deign an anſwer to the feeble rage
Of thy invidious tongue: But can I ſtand,

And tamely hear the ſacred voice of Truth
Produc'd by thee to witneſs for a lie!
With what provoking inſolence of ſcorn,
Veil'd in the artful, but tranſparent maſk
Of gen'rous Pity and indignant Zeal,
Has thy exaggerating ſtrength of words
Dwelt on the fate of my unhappy Sons!
A fate, which, far from a reproach to me,
Muſt ſure appear to each impartial eye
The ſtrongeſt argument which I could uſe,
The poiſon'd darts of Slander to repel,
And check the tongue of inſolence like thine.

Doubtleſs the annals of hiſtoric truth
Too many dire, diſgraceful proofs afford,
How ſtrong the hatred Vice to Genius bears;
Which ſtand eternal monuments of ſhame
To ev'ry land, whoſe vile, corrupted Sons,
Have tamely witneſs'd theſe ungen'rous deeds.
But, ſpite of all the fierce, inhuman rage,
With which the barb'rous, unrelenting pride,
Of brutal Ignorance, my Sons purſu'd
Thro' all the luckleſs tenor of their days,
Bloom not their laurel'd names, through ev'ry age,
With youth unfading in the voice of Praiſe;
And oft as Memory their fate recals,

Steals

Steals not the ſigh unbidden from the heart
Of kindred ſentiment and kindred taſte?
Burns not the flame of Indignation ſtrong,
Againſt their cruel foes, in ev'ry breaſt
That owns Humanity's endearing ſway?
If then, through all the dark and gloomy ſhade
Which Malice throws around, my conqu'ring light
With ſuch a clear, enchanting luſtre ſhines,
Can mortals doubt from whence the glory ſprung,
Or think its origin is not divine?

Small, I confeſs, is now the honour paid
To ſacred Song, and cruel the neglect
Which merit meets in this degen'rate age
Of ſelfiſh maxims and inglorious aims,
Of Pride and Folly, Vanity and Vice,
When Love and Friendſhip are romantic deem'd,
And Truth and Virtue dare no more appear,
Nor in the words, nor in the deeds of men.
But haſt thou then forgot, injurious ſlave,
How many ſplendid triumphs once were mine,
In thoſe divine, and more than golden days,
By far the faireſt in the Roll of Time,
When patriot Virtue, and heroic Zeal,
The Moral Wiſdom of the ſtudious Sage,
And each enchanting, amiable form,

Of

Of Grace and Beauty, all at once appear'd
In ancient *Greece*, the Nurſe of Arts divine?
Fann'd by the freſh, invigorating gale,
Which ſacred Liberty ſpontaneous breathes,
And kindly cheriſh'd by the potent Sun
Of Public Favour, and of Public Praiſe,
Theſe faireſt flow'rs of intellectual bloom
Diffus'd a pow'rful odour, which, in ſpite
Of intervening ages, ſtill retains
The matchleſs ſweetneſs of its firſt perfume.
Haſt thou forgot, with what propitious eye
The noble Sons of Glory then beheld
My now neglected charms; forgot, how oft
The words of Nations, and the deeds of Kings,
Gave proofs illuſtrious of the high eſteem
In which their better judgment held my name?
But, leſt the falſehood of thy crooked ſoul,
Perverſe and obſtinate, ſhould ſtill contend,
Turn for a moment hence thy backward eye
On that bright Portion of the Race of Time;
Behold Conviction, and diſpute no more.

Plac'd on the margin of the ſtormy ſea,
That roars around *Sicilia's* fertile iſle,
Lo! there delightful *Syracuſe* appears,

Which,

Which, by his valour ſav'd, yon haughty Chief *,
(Whoſe mantle coarſe, and long, neglected hair,
The rude, unpoliſh'd manners ſtrongly mark
Of *Sparta's* harſh, unamiable ſons,)
Prepares to enter, with his laurel'd troops
Return'd in triumph from the cloſe purſuit
Of that *Athenian* Hoſt, which long had fill'd
The war-encircled City with diſmay.
Slow in the Rear, the *Attic* Captives march,
With ſteps reluctant, and reverted arms:
Before the reſt the luckleſs leaders † walk,
Whoſe virtues merited a milder fate:
Too late they wiſh their firmneſs had been more;
Too late regret, that their unſteady mind
To glorious death preferr'd ignoble chains,
And tamely ſold their freedom to the foe.
But now the ſequel mark: Could'ſt thou believe
That haughty *Syracuſe*, with conqueſt crown'd,
Her juſt reſentment ever ſhould forget,
Or word of comfort deign, or gentle deed,
To thoſe invaders, whoſe ambition ſought
To lay her tow'ring glories in the duſt,
And make her crowded ſtreets a deſert waſte,
Her matrons widows, and her children ſlaves?

* Gylippus. † Nicias, &c.

But faithful Truth * declares, however ſtrange
The fact appear, that, while the Leaders fell
Unpitied victims to the public rage,
And thoſe of lower rank were doom'd to bear
Eternal toil in ſubterranean caves;
All thoſe, who, favour'd by the Pow'rs of Taſte,
To their attentive Maſters could recite
The moral verſes of the Tragic Sage †,
Whoſe birth the ſame victorious day beheld,
That ſaw the *Perſian* tyrant's ſhameful flight,
And ſacred Liberty to Greece reſtor'd:
From toil exempted, thoſe diſtinguiſh'd few
Each mark of favour met, and, ſoon releas'd,
Return'd exulting to their native ſhore:
So much they priz'd the ſweet, pathetic Bard,
And ſuch their fondneſs for his weeping Song.

Nor leſs illuſtrious was th' example giv'n
By Philip's warlike Son, when, much provok'd,
His fatal rage chaſtis'd rebellious *Thebes*,
And gave to ruin all her walls contain'd.
At his command, the high-uplifted arm
Of dire Deſtruction there ſuſpended hung,
And ſpar'd the Manſion viſited by Gods,

Beneath

* Plutarch in Vita Niciae. † Euripides.

Beneath whoſe ſacred roof, in former days,
Dwelt the great Maſter of the Æolian lyre *.

Nor think the Annals of more recent times
No proofs afford on which my cauſe may ſtand,
Did not the Father of the Chriſtian world,
The *Medicean* Pontiff †, he, whoſe court,
Polite and brilliant, was the fair abode
Of ev'ry elegant enchanting art:
Did not his ſov'reign Will aloud proclaim ‡
(Ere yet ſo many realms his pow'r diſown'd)
That thoſe henceforth ſhould Heretics be deem'd,
And ev'ry Chriſtian privilege forego,
Whoſe daring judgment ſhould preſume to blame
The wild, the pleaſing labyrinth of ſong,
Thro' which the careleſs *Arioſto* leads
Our ſteps bewilder'd, by the pow'rful charm
Of ſcenes attractive, and of artful eaſe §.

Did

* Pindar. † Leo X.

‡ The late Tranſlator of *Arioſto* calls in queſtion, with ſome reaſon, in his life of that Poet, the exiſtence of this curious, critical bull. It is hoped, however, that the circumſtance having been repeated by ſo many writers, renders its credibility ſufficient for the purpoſes of poetry.

§ Le Negligenze ſue ſono Artifici.

TASSO.

Did not the Son of *Albion's* martyr'd King,
When to his regal ſeat at length recall'd,
When filial Love, and royal Juſtice doom'd
The dire contrivers of his father's fate,
Without diſtinction, for their crime to die:
Did not his Mercy ſpare the ſacred head
Of *Eden's* blind and venerable Bard,
Whoſe ſtrength of fancy, and ſuperior art,
Command our wonder, and extort our praiſe:
Though well he knew, that, by miſtaken zeal
For fancied Liberty, the Bard miſled,
His fervid eloquence had oft employ'd
To wound the mem'ry of the murder'd Prince,
And juſtify to men, by ſpecious art,
The vile Uſurper's arbitrary deeds.

But why go on, examples to produce?
Thoſe I have mention'd will ſuffice to ſhow,
Beyond a doubt, that, from the firſt of Time,
In ev'ry nation, and in ev'ry age,
My name was hallow'd, and my pow'r confeſt.

But grant that all againſt me ſaid were true,
That nought of brilliant or of ſplendid life
My ſober vot'ries could expect to know:
Grant that the ſmile of Favour never chear'd

The

The Poet's toil, nor laurel deck'd his brow;
Grant that the Finger of admiring Fame,
Diſtinguiſh'd talents never pointed out;
That ſacred Genius ſtill were doom'd to lead
The creeping ſilence of his humble days
Remote from notice, in the miſty vale
Of dull Obſcurity's *Cimmerian* Iſle;
Would theſe conceſſions all my pow'r diſarm,
And nought of Love attractive leave behind:
Boaſts not my favour an intrinſic charm
Beyond the influence of external things,
Which, like the ſacred peace that Virtue gives,
Is plac'd ſuperior to the reach of Fate,
And chears alike the cottage and the court:
Say *, can the Rich, in all his hoarded wealth,
The Gay in pleaſure, or the Proud in pomp,
A tranſport feel, which will in force compare
With that ſenſation ſtrong, of keen delight;
Which plaſtic ſouls, and they alone, can know,
What time the fierce, expanding boſom glows
With ſudden ray of more than human thought,
Darted impetuous from the holy ſeats
Of Inſpiration, on the Lightning's wing

* Piu trovarono tra le lor Favole i Poeti, che molti Ricchi tra lor Teſori.

BOCCACCIO.

And caught with ardour by the rapid Mind?
Say, will the banquet Luxury provides,
The voice of Muſic, or the ſprightly Dance,
The laugh by ſocial merriment inſpir'd,
Or ev'n the ſmile of Love, a pleaſure yield
In ſweetneſs equal to the mental joy
Which plays unmix't around the heart of taſte,
When from the gardens of eternal bloom,
Where Fancy ſcatters buds of ev'ry hue,
Diſcernment nice ſelects the faireſt flow'rs,
To weave the garland of unfading praiſe *?
Theſe the purſuits which ever will ſupply
To Youth or age, the priſon or the throne,
Without external aid, a ſacred, pure,
Perpetual ſtream of elegant delight,
Whoſe ſource unfailing in itſelf is found,
Nor drawn precarious from a foreign ſpring.
Theſe are the pleaſures riches cannot buy,
Which more than balance all the ſhocks ſevere,

Which

* If I could thus weave the garlands of unfading applauſe.

FITZOSBORNE'S LETTERS.

The author hopes that his declaration of having written this line four years previous to his peruſing *Fitzoſborne*, will be admitted as a ſtrong evidence, how cautiouſly the completeſt coincidence of expreſſion ſhould be inſiſted on as an unequivocal proof of imitation.

Which ſouls, of feelings exquiſitely fine,
Muſt oft, unpitied, be condemn'd to meet,
In daily commerce with a vulgar world
Of ſordid maxims, and of narrow views,
Nor fir'd by Virtue, nor by Taſte refin'd.

To theſe divine, ineſtimable gifts,
Be added now the kindling hope of Fame,
And where the Spirit of ſo groſs a mold,
As long the bright Temptation could reſiſt,
Nor inſtant ruſh to ſeize the proffer'd good?
Oh! how unworthy of a Poet's name
Were he, whoſe heart one moment could delay
To call his own the darkeſt thread of life,
Which envious Fate for Genius ever ſpun:
If heav'n would kindle, in his favour'd breaſt,
The ſame immortal ſtrength of ſacred fire,
And Fortune promiſe, that the praiſe of men
With equal voice his glory ſhould proclaim *!

Shall then *Alexis*, with a temper form'd
For theſe attainments, vainly ſtrive to croſs
The will of Nature, and, with fooliſh pride,

Or

* Cujus non fugio mortem ſi famam adſequar. PHÆDRUS.

Or by the falſe, malignant counſel ſway'd
Of ſordid intereſt and low deſire,
Reject my bounties, and my favour ſcorn?
Oh! no, I ſee the elevated eye
Of grateful rapture, and exulting joy,
Fix't on my features, with the gaze of love,
His free conſent and willing mind declare.

Yes, thine I am, Seraphic Maid,
Immortal Queen of ſacred ſong;
Thy pow'r my thoughts have long obey'd;
To thee alone my vows are paid;
To thee my faireſt hours belong.

Since firſt my careleſs infant eye
Began the forms of good to ſpy;
Since firſt my Soul could beauty ſee,
My conſtant Heart was fix't on thee.

And as more of Life I knew,
Stronger ſtill the Paſſion grew,
All the force of Love to ſhow,
Which for Thee my wiſhes know:
Where ſhall now the feeble Mind
Words of ſtrength and rapture find?

Who thy Beauties ever knew,
Nor to thee Affection bore?
Who thy many Charms could view,
And not thoſe Charms adore?

Thine is the eye of daring Roll,
Which ſpace can ne'er confine,
Which glances quick from Pole to Pole,
With phrenzy half divine.

Thine is the Trumpet's lofty ſound,
And thine the dulcet lyre;
Thine is the Wing that ſpurns the ground,
And thine the Soul of Fire.

Before thoſe ſhades of colour'd Light
Which oft thy glowing Hand beſtows,
Pale are the tints of Nature bright,
With which ſhe decks the vernal Roſe.

The Phantoms fair of elegant Deſire,
Each Pleaſure bland, and each enchanting Love,
With Zeal and Ardor, emulous conſpire
Thy Charms to heighten, and thy Form improve.

On thee their choiceſt gifts the Graces ſhow'r,
As round thy ſacred Head they ſportive play;
And o'er thy golden Dreams profuſely pour
The magic Light of Fancy's living Ray.

The various paſſions too are all thy own,
Each Form of Terror grim and fair Delight;
In theſe thy beſt, thy chiefeſt Art is ſhown,
To paint their Geſtures, and their Words aright.

Nor thine alone the mimic Art
Of fabled Joy and fancied Grief;
Thine is the taſk to mend the Heart,
And thine the balm of ſoft Relief.

To ſoothe the ſadneſs of my penſive Mind,
Along thy flow'ry paths how oft I rove,
And leaving life and all its cares behind,
Haunt the ſweet Mazes of thy fairy Grove!

Where Dullneſs ne'er intrudes with raven cry,
Where forms of vulgar Aſpect ne'er appear,
Where all is Beauty to the charmed Eye,
And all is Muſic to the raptur'd Ear.

FINIS.

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